



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 22, 2021

Lee Zeldin, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations,
House Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Zeldin:

Thank you for your questions during the hearing and your June 7 letter regarding the Secretary's public designation of former President of Albania, former Prime Minister of Albania, and current and former Member of Parliament of Albania Sali Berisha under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2021 (Section 7031(c)) for his involvement in significant corruption during the time he was a public official. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made it a priority to combat corruption globally using all legal authorities available to them. Section 7031(c) is a uniquely powerful tool that has been frequently used since its inception in 2008 because designations pursuant to it can be announced publicly.

As a mandatory statutory authority, Section 7031(c) requires the Secretary, or his or her designee, to publicly or privately designate officials of foreign governments, as well as their immediate family members, when there is credible information that the official has been involved, directly or indirectly, in significant corruption, as long as the qualifying acts occurred at the time the individual was a public official. Credible information can include classified or unclassified all source information, including credible media reporting, civil society reporting, Department and interagency reporting, foreign government information, and any other source of information deemed credible by the Department.

Regarding the public designation of Mr. Berisha, the Department can confirm it followed established procedures to determine he was involved in significant corruption at the time he was a public official. This includes a complete and detailed review by all Department policy stakeholders, including the relevant regional bureau, as well as a legal review by the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser.

Finally, regarding the reason for the designation, Mr. Berisha's involvement in significant corruption occurred during his tenure as Prime Minister of Albania and involved the misappropriation of public funds and interference with public processes, including using his power for his own benefit and to enrich his political allies and his family members at the expense of the Albanian public's confidence in their government institutions and public officials. Furthermore, as the Secretary noted, Mr. Berisha's own rhetoric demonstrates he is willing to protect himself, his family members, and his political allies at the expense of independent investigations, anticorruption efforts, and accountability measures. As you may know, some of Mr. Berisha's specific corrupt activities have been widely reported in Albanian and international media, and credible investigatory reporting.

Thank you again for your interest in this designation and the Department's implementation of Section 7031(c). The Department looks forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen the coordination and communication between the Department and Congress, including our shared interest in combating corruption and identifying corrupt actors globally.

Sincerely,



Naz Durakoglu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs